

Excerpts from: *The God Delusion*, by Richard Dawkins.

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## The Danish Cartoon Kerfuffle

The case flared up in February 2006 – a ludicrous episode, which veered wildly between the extremes of comedy and tragedy. The previous September, the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published 12 cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad. Over the next three months, indignation was carefully and systematically nurtured throughout the Islamic world by a small group of Muslims living in Denmark, led by two imams who had been granted sanctuary there. In late 2005 these malevolent exiles travelled from Denmark to Egypt bearing a dossier, which was copied and circulated from there to the whole Islamic world, including, importantly, Indonesia. The dossier contained falsehoods about alleged maltreatment of Muslims in Denmark, and the tendentious lie that *Jyllands-Posten* was a government-run newspaper. It also contained the 12 cartoons which, crucially, the imams had supplemented with three additional images whose origin was mysterious but which certainly had no connection with Denmark. Unlike the original 12, these three add-ons were genuinely offensive – or would have been if they had, as the zealous propagandists alleged, depicted Muhammad. A particularly damaging one of these three was not a cartoon at all but a faxed photograph of a bearded man wearing a fake pig's snout held on with elastic. It has subsequently turned out that this was an Associated Press photograph of a Frenchman entered for a pig-squealing contest at a country fair in France. The photograph had no connection whatsoever with the prophet Muhammad, no connection with Islam, and no connection with Denmark. But the Muslim activists, on their mischief-stirring hike to Cairo, implied all three connections . . . with predictable results.

The carefully cultivated hurt and offense was brought to an explosive head five months after the 12 cartoons were originally published. Demonstrators in Pakistan and Indonesia burned Danish flags (where did they get them from?) and hysterical demands were made for the Danish government to apologize. (Apologize for what? They didn't draw the cartoons, or publish them. Danes just live in a country with a free press, something that people in many Islamic countries might have a hard time understanding.) Newspapers in Norway, Germany, France, and even the United States (but, conspicuously, not Britain) reprinted the cartoons in gestures of solidarity with *Jyllands-Posten*, which added fuel to the flames. Embassies and consulates were trashed, Danish goods were boycotted, Danish citizens and, indeed, Westerners generally, were physically threatened; Christian churches in Pakistan, with no Danish or European connections at all, were burned. Nine people were killed when Libyan rioters attacked and burned the Italian consulate in Benghazi. As Germaine Greer wrote, *what these people really love and do best is pandemonium.*

A bounty of \$1 million was placed on the head of *the Danish cartoonist* by a Pakistani imam – who was apparently unaware that there were 12 different Danish cartoonists, and almost certainly unaware that the three most offensive pictures had never appeared in Denmark at all (and, by the way, where was that million going to come from?). In Nigeria, Muslim protesters against the Danish cartoons burned down several Christian churches, and used machetes to attack and kill (black Nigerian) Christians in the streets. One Christian was put inside a rubber tire, doused with petrol and set alight. Demonstrators were photographed in Britain bearing banners saying *Slay those who*

*insult Islam, Butcher those who mock Islam, Europe you will pay: Demolition is on its way, and Behead those who insult Islam.* Fortunately, our political leaders were on hand to remind us that Islam is a religion of peace and mercy.

In the aftermath of all this, the journalist Andrew Mueller interviewed Britain's leading moderate Muslim, Sir Iqbal Sacranie. Moderate he may be by today's Islamic standards, but in Andrew Mueller's account he still stands by a the remark he made when Salman Rushdie was condemned to death for writing a novel: *Death is perhaps too easy for him* – a remark that sets him in ignominious contrast to his courageous predecessor as Britain's most influential Muslim, the late Dr Zaki Badawi, who offered Salman Rushdie sanctuary in his own home. Sacranie told Mueller how concerned he was about the Danish cartoons. Mueller was concerned too, but for a different reason: *I am concerned that the ridiculous, disproportionate reaction to some unfunny sketches in an obscure Scandinavian newspaper may confirm that . . . Islam and the West are fundamentally irreconcilable.* Sacranie, on the other hand, praised British newspapers for not reprinting the cartoons, to which Mueller voiced the suspicion of most of the nation that the restraint of British newspapers derived less from sensitivity to Muslim discontent than it did from a desire not to have their windows broken.

Sacranie explained that the person of the prophet . . . is revered so profoundly in the Muslim world, with a love and affection that cannot be explained in words. It goes beyond your parents, your loved ones, your children. That is part of the faith. There is also an Islamic teaching that one does not depict the prophet. This rather assumes, as Mueller observed:

*that the values of Islam trump anyone else's – which is what any follower of Islam does assume, just as any follower of any religion believes that theirs is the sole way, truth, and light. If people wish to love a 7<sup>th</sup>-century preacher more than their own families, that's up to them, but nobody else is obliged to take it seriously . . .*

Except that if you don't take it seriously and accord it proper respect, you are physically threatened, on a scale that no other religion has aspired to since the Middle Ages. One can't help wondering why

such violence is necessary, given that, as Mueller notes:

*If any of you clowns are right about anything, the cartoonists are going to hell anyway – won't that do? In the meantime, if you want to get excited about affronts to Muslims, read the Amnesty International reports on Syria and Saudi Arabia.*

Many people have noted the contrast between the hysterical hurt professed by Muslims and the readiness with which Arab media publish stereotypical anti-Jewish cartoons. At a demonstration in Pakistan against the Danish cartoons, a woman in a black burka was photographed carrying a banner reading: *God Bless Hitler.*

In response to all this frenzied pandemonium, decent liberal newspapers deplored the violence and made token noises about free speech. But at the same time they expressed *respect* and *sympathy* for the deep *offense* and *hurt* that Muslims had *suffered*. The hurt and suffering consisted, remember, not in any person enduring violence or real pain of any kind: nothing more than a few daubs of printing ink on a newspaper that nobody outside Denmark would ever have heard of but for a deliberate campaign of incitement to mayhem.

I am not in favor of offending or hurting anyone just for the sake of it. But I am intrigued and mystified by the disproportionate privileging of religion in our otherwise secular societies. All politicians must get used to disrespectful cartoons of their faces, and nobody riots in their defense. What is so special about religion that we grant it such uniquely privileged respect? As H L Mencken said: *We must respect the other fellow's religion, but only in the sense and to the extent that we respect his theory that his wife is beautiful and his children smart.*

## How Do You Define God?

The Nobel Prize-winning physicist (and atheist) Steven Weinberg made the point as well as anybody . . .

Some people have views of God that are so broad and flexible that it is inevitable that they will find God wherever they look for

him. One hears it said that *God is the ultimate* or *God is our better nature*, or *God is the universe*. Of course, like any other word, the word *God* can be given any meaning we like. If you want to say that God is energy, then you can find God in a lump of coal.

Weinberg is surely right that, if the word *God* is not to become completely useless, it should be used in the way people have generally understood it: to denote a supernatural creator that is appropriate for us to worship.

## What is a Naturalist? What is an Atheist?

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, *naturalist* meant what it still means for most of us today: a student of the natural world. But philosophers use *naturalist* in a very different sense, as the opposite of *supernaturalist*.

An *atheist* in this sense of philosophical naturalist is somebody who believes there is nothing beyond the natural, physical world, no supernatural creative intelligence lurking behind the observable universe, no soul that outlasts the body, and no miracles – except in the sense of natural phenomena that we don't yet understand. If there is something that appears to lie beyond the natural world as it is now imperfectly understood, we hope eventually to understand it and embrace it within the natural.

## Deists, Theists, and Pantheists

A *theist* believes in a supernatural intelligence who, in addition to his main work of creating the universe in the first place, is still around to oversee and influence the subsequent fate of his initial creation. In many theistic belief systems, the deity is intimately involved in human affairs. He answers prayers; forgives or punishes sins; intervenes in the world by performing miracles; frets about good and bad deeds, and knows when we do them (or even **think** of doing them).

A *Deist*, too, believes in a supernatural intelligence, one whose activities were confined to setting up the laws that govern the universe in the first place. The deist God never intervenes thereafter, and certainly has no specific interest in human affairs.

*Pantheists* don't believe in a supernatural God at all, but use the word God as a non-supernatural synonym for Nature, or for the Universe, or for the lawfulness that governs its workings.

Deists differ from theists in that their God does not answer prayers, is not interested in sins or confessions, does not read our thoughts and does not intervene with capricious miracles. Deists differ from pantheists in that the deist God is some kind of cosmic intelligence, rather than the pantheist's metaphoric or poetic synonym for the laws of the universe. Pantheism is sexed-up atheism. Deism is watered-down theism.

## Intellectual Treason

I wish that physicists would refrain from using the word *God* in their special metaphorical sense. The metaphorical or pantheistic God of the physicists is light years away from the interventionist, miracle-wreaking, thought-reading, sin-punishing, prayer-answering God of the Bible, of priests, mullahs, and rabbis, and of ordinary language. Deliberately to confuse the two is, in my opinion, an act of intellectual high treason.

## Einstein's Religion

I don't try to imagine a personal God; it suffices to stand in awe at the structure of the world, insofar as it allows our inadequate senses to appreciate it.

To sense that behind anything that can be experienced there is a something that our mind cannot grasp and whose beauty and sublimity reaches us only indirectly and as a feeble reflection, this is religiousness. In this sense I am religious. In this sense I too am religious, with the reservation that *cannot grasp* does not have to mean *forever ungraspable*. But I prefer not to call myself religious because it is misleading. It is destructively misleading because, for the vast majority of people, religion implies supernatural. Carl Sagan put it well:

If by *God* one means the set of physical laws that govern the universe, then clearly there is such a God. This God is emotionally unsatisfying . . . it does not make much sense to pray to the law of gravity.

## R-e-s-p-e-c-t. Find Out What it Means to Me.

A widespread assumption, which nearly everybody in our society accepts – the non-religious included – is that religious faith is especially vulnerable to offense and should be protected by an abnormally thick wall of respect, in a different class from the respect that any human being should pay to any other.

It is in the light of the unparalleled presumption of respect for religion that I make my own disclaimer for this book. I shall not go out of my way to offend, but nor shall I don kid gloves to handle religion any more gently than I would handle anything else.

## Oh, My God!

The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.

## Roman Catholic Polytheism

It is especially the Roman Catholic branch of Christianity that pushes its recurrent flirtation with polytheism towards runaway inflation. The Trinity is (are?) joined by Mary, Queen of Heaven, a goddess in all but name, who surely runs God himself a close second as a target of prayers. The pantheon is further swollen by an army of saints, whose intercessory power makes them, if not demigods, well worth approaching on their own specialist subjects. The Catholic Community Forum helpfully lists 5120 saints, together with their areas of expertise, which include abdominal pains, abuse victims, anorexia, arms dealers, blacksmiths, broken bones, bomb technicians, and bowel disorders, to venture no further than the Bs. And we mustn't forget the four Choirs of Angelic Hosts, arrayed in nine orders: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels (heads of all hosts), and just plain old Angels, including our closest friends, the ever-watchful Guardian Angels. What impresses me about Catholic mythology is partly its tasteless kitsch but mostly the airy nonchalance

with which these people make up the details as they go along. It is just shamelessly invented.

Pope John Paul II created more saints than all his predecessors of the past several centuries put together, and he had a special affinity with the Virgin Mary. His polytheistic hankerings were dramatically demonstrated in 1981 when he suffered an assassination attempt in Rome, and attributed his survival to intervention by Our Lady of Fatima: *A maternal hand guided the bullet*. One cannot help wondering why she didn't guide it to miss him altogether. Others might think the team of surgeons who operated on him for six hours deserved at least a share of the credit; but perhaps their hands, too, were maternally guided. The relevant point is that it wasn't just Our Lady who, in the Pope's opinion, guided the bullet, but specifically Our Lady of Fatima. Presumably Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Medjugorje, Our Lady of Akita, Our Lady of Zeitoun, Our Lady of Garabandal, and Our Lady of Knock were busy on other errands at the time.

## Kill the Bastards!

Do people who hold up the Bible as an inspiration to moral rectitude have the slightest notion of what is actually written in it? The following offenses merit the death penalty, according to Leviticus 20: cursing your parents; committing adultery; making love to your stepmother or your daughter-in-law; homosexuality; marrying a woman and her daughter; bestiality (and to add injury to insult, the unfortunate beast is to be killed too). You also get executed, of course, for working on the Sabbath; the point is made again and again throughout the Old Testament.

In Numbers 15, the children of Israel found a man in the wilderness gathering sticks on the forbidden day. They arrested him and then asked God what to do with him. As it turned out, God was in no mood for half-measures that day. **And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died.** Did this harmless gatherer of firewood have a wife and children to grieve for him? Did he whimper with fear as the first stones flew, and scream with pain as the fusillade crashed into his head?

What shocks me today about such stories is not that they really happened. They probably didn't. What makes my jaw drop is that people today should base their lives on such an appalling role model as Yahweh – and, even worse, that they should bossily try to force the same evil monster (whether fact or fiction) on the rest of us.

## Atonement: Barking Mad

I have described atonement, the central doctrine of Christianity, as vicious, sadomasochistic, and repellent. We should also dismiss it as barking mad, but for its ubiquitous familiarity which has dulled our objectivity. If God wanted to forgive our sins, why not just forgive them, without having himself tortured and executed in payment – thereby, incidentally, condemning remote future generations of Jews to pogroms and persecution as Christ-killers: did that hereditary sin pass down in the semen too?

To cap it all, Adam, the supposed perpetrator of the original sin, never existed in the first place; an awkward fact – excusably unknown to Paul but presumably known to an omniscient God (and Jesus, if you believe he was God?) – which fundamentally undermines the premise of the whole tortuously nasty theory. Oh, but of course, the story of Adam and Eve was only ever *symbolic*, wasn't it? Symbolic? So, in order to impress himself, Jesus had himself tortured and executed, in vicarious punishment for a *symbolic sin* committed by a *nonexistent individual*? As I said, barking mad, as well as viciously unpleasant.

## Thou Shall Not Kill. Just Kidding!

One of the fiercest penalties in the Old Testament is the one exacted for blasphemy. It is still in force in certain countries. Section 295-C of the Pakistan penal code prescribes the death penalty for this *crime*. On August 18, 2001, Dr Younis Shaikh, a medical doctor and lecturer, was sentenced to death for blasphemy. His particular crime was to tell students that the prophet Muhammad was not a Muslim before he invented the religion at the age of forty. Eleven of his students reported him to the authorities for this *offense*.

The blasphemy law in Pakistan is more usually invoked against Christians, such as Augustine

Ashiq "Kingri" Masih, who was sentenced to death in Faisalabad in 2000. Masih, as a Christian, was not allowed to marry his sweetheart because she was a Muslim and – incredibly – Pakistani (and Islamic) law does not allow a Muslim woman to marry a non-Muslim man. So he tried to convert to Islam and was then accused of doing so for base motives. It is not clear from the report I have read whether this in itself was the capital crime, or whether it was something he is alleged to have said about the prophet's own morals. Either way, it certainly was not the kind of offense that would warrant a death sentence in any country whose laws are free of religious bigotry.

In 2006 in Afghanistan, Abdul Rahman was sentenced to death for converting to Christianity. Did he kill anyone, hurt anybody, steal anything, damage anything? No. All he did was change his mind. Internally and privately, he changed his mind. He entertained certain thoughts which were not to the liking of the ruling party of his country. And this, remember, is not the Afghanistan of the Taliban but the liberated Afghanistan of Hamid Karzai, set up by the American-led coalition. Mr Rahman finally escaped execution, but only on a plea of insanity, and only after intense international pressure. He has now sought asylum in Italy, to avoid being murdered by zealots eager to do their Islamic duty. It is still an article of the constitution of liberated Afghanistan that the penalty for apostasy is death. Apostasy remember, doesn't mean actual harm to persons or property. It is pure thoughtcrime, to use George Orwell's 1984 terminology and the official punishment for it under Islamic law is death.

On September 3, 1992, to take one example where it was actually carried out, Sadiq Abdul Karim Malallah was publicly beheaded in Saudi Arabia after being lawfully convicted of apostasy and blasphemy.

But let's have no complacency in Christendom. As recently as 1922 in Britain, John William Gott was sentenced to nine months' hard labor for blasphemy: he compared Jesus to a clown. Almost unbelievably, the crime of blasphemy is still on the statute book in Britain, and in 2005 a Christian group tried to bring a private prosecution for blasphemy against the BBC for broadcasting *Jerry Springer, the Opera*.

## Abortion

A consequentialist or utilitarian is likely to approach the abortion question in a very different way, by trying to weigh up suffering. Does the embryo suffer? (Presumably not if it is aborted before it has a nervous system; and even if it is old enough to have a nervous system it surely suffers less than, say, an adult cow in a slaughterhouse). Does the pregnant woman, or her family, suffer if she does not have an abortion? Very possibly so; and, in any case, given that the embryo lacks a nervous system, shouldn't the mother's well-developed nervous system have the choice?

A certain kind of religious mind cannot see the moral difference between killing a microscopic cluster of cells on the one hand, and killing a full-grown doctor on the other.

On July 29, 1994, Paul Hill took a shotgun and murdered Dr John Britton and his bodyguard James Barrett outside Britton's clinic in Pensacola, Florida. He then gave himself up to the police, saying he had killed the doctor to prevent the future deaths of innocent babies.

## Roll Over, Beethoven

*The Great Beethoven Fallacy* exists in several forms. [This one] is cast in the form of a hypothetical dialogue between two doctors.

About the terminating of pregnancy, I want your opinion. The father was syphilitic, the mother tuberculous. Of the four children born, the first was blind, the second died, the third was deaf and dumb, the fourth was also tuberculous. What would you have done?

I would have terminated the pregnancy.  
Then you would have murdered Beethoven.

The internet is riddled with so-called pro-life websites that repeat this ridiculous story, and incidentally change factual premises with wanton abandon.

This is, in fact, a fully fledged urban legend, a fabrication, deliberately disseminated by people with a vested interest in spreading it. But the fact that it is a lie is, in any case, completely beside the point. Even if it were not a lie, the argument derived

from it is a very bad argument indeed. The reasoning behind this odious little argument is breathtakingly fallacious, for unless it is being suggested that there is some causal connection between having a tubercular mother and a syphilitic father and giving birth to a musical genius, the world is no more likely to be deprived of a Beethoven by abortion than by chaste abstinence from intercourse.

Of the 43 pro-life websites quoting a version of the Beethoven legend which my Google search turned up on the day of writing, not a single one spotted the illogic in the argument. Every one of them (they were all religious sites, by the way) fell for the fallacy, hook, line, and sinker. One of them even acknowledged [Peter and Jean] Medawar (spelled Medavvar) as the source. So eager were these people to believe a fallacy congenial to their faith, they didn't even notice that the Medawars had quoted the argument solely in order to blow it out of the water.

As the Medawars were entirely right to point out, the logical conclusion to the human potential argument is that we potentially deprive a human soul of the gift of existence every time we fail to seize any opportunity for sexual intercourse. Every refusal of any offer of copulation by a fertile individual is by this dopey pro-life logic, tantamount to the murder of a potential child! Even resisting rape could be represented as murdering a potential baby. The Great Beethoven Fallacy is a typical example of the kind of logical mess we get into when our minds are befuddled by religiously inspired absolutism.

## Faith Is Dangerous

As long as we accept the principle that religious faith must be respected simply because it is religious faith, it is hard to withhold respect from the faith of Osama bin Laden and the suicide bombers. The alternative, one so transparent that it should need no urging, is to abandon the principle of automatic respect for religious faith. This is one reason why I do everything in my power to warn people against faith itself, not just against so-called *extremist* faith. The teachings of *moderate* religion, though not extremist in themselves, are an open invitation to extremism.

Christianity, just as much as Islam, teaches children that unquestioned faith is a virtue. You don't have to make the case for what you believe. If somebody announces that it is part of his faith, the rest of society, whether of the same faith, or another, or of none, is obliged, by ingrained custom, to respect it without question; respect it until the day it manifests itself in a horrible massacre like the destruction of the World Trade Center or the London or Madrid bombings. Then there is a great chorus of disownings, as clerics and community leaders (who elected **them**, by the way?) line up to explain that this extremism is a perversion of the true faith. But how can there be a perversion of faith, if faith, lacking objective justification, doesn't have any demonstrable standard to pervert?

*The Myth of Moderate Islam* is the title of a recent article in the (London) *Spectator* (July 30, 2005) by scholar Patrick Sookhdeo.

By far the majority of Muslims today live their lives without recourse to violence, for the Koran is like a pick-and-mix selection. If you want peace, you can find peaceable verses. If you want war, you can find bellicose verses.

Sookhdeo goes on to explain how Islamic scholars, in order to cope with the many contradictions that they found in the Quran, developed the principle of abrogation, whereby later texts trump earlier ones. Unfortunately, the peaceable passages in the Quran are mostly early, dating from Muhammad's time in Mecca. The more belligerent verses tend to date from later, after his flight to Medina.

Generally (and this applies to Christianity no less than to Islam), what is really pernicious is the practice of teaching children that faith itself is a virtue. Faith is an evil precisely because it requires no justification and brookes no argument. Teaching children that unquestioned faith is a virtue primes them – given certain other ingredients that are not hard to come by – to grow up into potentially lethal weapons for future jihads or crusades.

If children were taught to question and think through their beliefs, instead of being taught the superior virtue of faith without question, it is a good bet that there would be no suicide bombers. Suicide bombers do what they do because they really believe what they were taught in their

religious schools: that duty to God exceeds all other priorities, and that martyrdom in his service will be rewarded in the gardens of Paradise. And they were taught that lesson not necessarily by extremist fanatics but by decent, gentle, mainstream religious instructors, who lined them up in their madrasas, sitting in rows, rhythmically nodding their innocent little heads up and down while they learned every word of the holy book like demented parrots. Faith can be very, very dangerous, and deliberately to plant it into the vulnerable mind of an innocent child is a grievous wrong.

## Edgardo Mortara

In 1858 Edgardo Mortara, a six-year-old child of Jewish parents living in Bologna, was legally seized by the papal police acting under orders from the Inquisition. Edgardo was forcibly dragged away from his weeping mother and distraught father to the Catechumens (house for the conversion of Jews and Muslims) in Rome, and thereafter brought up as a Roman Catholic. Aside from occasional brief visits under close priestly supervision, his parents never saw him again. The story is told by David I Kertzer in his remarkable book, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*.

Edgardo's story was by no means unusual in Italy at the time, and the reason for these priestly abductions was always the same. In every case, the child had been secretly baptized at some earlier date, usually by a Catholic nursemaid, and the Inquisition later came to hear of the baptism. It was a central part of the Roman Catholic belief system that, once a child had been baptized, however informally and clandestinely, that child was irrevocably transformed into a Christian. In their mental world, to allow a Christian child to stay with his Jewish parents was not an option, and they maintained this bizarre and cruel stance steadfastly, and with the utmost sincerity, in the face of worldwide outrage. That widespread outrage, by the way, was dismissed by the Catholic newspaper *Civiltà Cattolica* as due to the international power of rich Jews.

Apart from the publicity it aroused, Edgardo Mortara's history was entirely typical of many others. He had once been looked after by Anna Morisi, an illiterate Catholic girl who was then 14. He fell ill and she panicked lest he might die.

Brought up in a stupor of belief that a child who died unbaptized would suffer forever in hell, she asked advice from a Catholic neighbor who told her how to do a baptism. She went back into the house, threw some water from a bucket on little Edgardo's head and said, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And that was it. From that moment on, Edgardo was legally a Christian. When the priests of the Inquisition learned of the incident years later, they acted promptly and decisively, giving no thought to the sorrowful consequences of their action.

Amazingly for a rite that could have such monumental significance for a whole extended family, the Catholic Church allowed (and still allows) anybody to baptize anybody else. The baptizer doesn't have to be a priest. Neither the child, nor the parents, nor anybody else has to consent to the baptism. Nothing need be signed. Nothing need be officially witnessed. All that is necessary is a splash of water, a few words, a helpless child, and a superstitious and catechistically brainwashed babysitter. Actually, only the last of these is needed because, assuming the child is too young to be a witness, who is even to know? An American colleague who was brought up Catholic writes to me as follows:

*We used to baptize our dolls. I don't remember any of us baptizing our little Protestant friends but no doubt that has happened and happens today. We made little Catholics of our dolls, taking them to church, giving them Holy Communion etc. We were brainwashed to be good Catholic mothers early on.*